of ~~bought~~ bringing this on by love of Society!
Since we came back I went (1) Ethel
Smyth lunch: (2) dine with Colefax. (3)
Tête à tête dinner with Mary Hutchinson-
Thats all. Or do you mean that I'm to
clear human intercourse altogether?
Or am I only to see Queen Mary? — like a
celebrated composer whom Mass is
thanky to blow before that unhappy
woman? I don't go eating sausages-
drinking tea with Lytton & Mr.
Barnes — Or am I only to see Ethel
Smyth on those rare occasions when she's
not galloping round London to
lunch parties given in her honour! What-
humbug! a keyboard you are! But I'm
swollen 130,000 words you back in 10 months. 20
very, Think, will. do what you like —
unclouded, Cheshire Cat V.

Rota 2. Ψ. 69

NYPL

52 T S. ~~Wed~~ Monday. 26 Dec 1934

Now "I'll tell you this." to obey your style at its weakest, when I get a letter from you, beating your breast, & going into all the usual attitudes, "how have I wasted my affections — what a serpent Virginia is — what a fiend, what an undine —" then I harden harder, & colder cooler, for I think Ethel Smyth the most attitudinising unreal woman I've ever known — living in a mid Victorian dentists waiting room of emotional falsity — like breaking up quarrels for the sake of dramatising them, myself publicity & tittle from titles surrounded Kings & concubines & Kays, by flatterers, a swallower of falsehoods, why should I want this manhandling, this brawling this bullying, this malusage? when

I'm friend that refuse me love me
& treat me honestly generously &
according to the fair light of day?
Why may why Cowtow to the
bragging of a Brigadier General
Daylight? why?

V.

NYPL

Rota 2.4.63

Oh I've said nothing about your Ears & your Liver — & your Eczema: entombing egotism: next time I'll be less absorbed.

Monks House.

Thursday 29th March 1934

I have been very remiss — all my letters began with thes, though I don't really feel it, denying as I do all ties, all responsibilities.

Do you know — no you don't — I have just through almost the most disagreable six weeks of my life, & I'm so happy, so free today. Well this was what happened: only it wound a letter about & the preamble. Nelly, the cook, the cook we've had 18 years, has been worrying me the last 12 months or so, & gradually I was coming convinced we must part — d'ye remember she had her kidneys out, & the Dr. appealed to me to take her back, which I did against my judgment? Well, she's been behaving again into her old tempers & glooms, & I could not decide what to do. In the intervals we've had angelic & an admirable cook — & then 6 weeks ago today, when I was ill, there was a row over an electric oven, which we wanted to try; & the wonderful. And suddenly I felt this is

the End; & let her stay she will grow on us & wither & decay. But I could not face a month with her under notice, so I laid down a scheme to which I kept for 6 weeks, until I almost did get - that is I kept severely but severely at a distance; & again & again she tried to break me down: she cajoled, & apologised, & half confessed what was up, but not quite. And we had the whole house decorated - floors up, beds down, every room a muddle, & a agony. & she was determined not to let a word escape her; & so we went on till this Tuesday when I sent for her to the drawing room & told her plainly NYPL that I could stand the strain no longer & she must go. And from all Tuesday & Wednesday we lived in a storm of abuse & apology, & hysterics & appeals & maniacal threats, she calmly refusing to go, & opening my notes & the cheque - a handsome one - stuffing it back in my pocket, following me about the house, till I was driven in the cold wind to stand yesterday morning parading Oxford Street, as my study is on a mere in the builders hands. which we had arranged to drive all here at 2.30: & then came the final battle, the final appeal & abuse & tears, & she refused to shake hands with L. & so we left her, grasping a wet cloth at the sink. Staring at us, & off we went. & she still says she will not go.

Rota 2.4.63

"No, no, no, I will not leave you" I heard her reiterate,
to which I said, Oh but you must, & so we slammed
the door.

Why does this scene, this long drawn out struggle with a how
demoralise one more than any home or anger scene with Ben over
Kind.' Felt such a weight on me all those weeks
Thinking, what I must Do next for Ben that sometimes I
could hardly rest in my chair. Honestly, I have hardly
sat down serenely to a book. Once the moment
came, my horror vanished; & I didn't mind the abuse &
the tears; indeed, I saw so deep into her hoor
muddled tempted but completely self seeking mind
that I felt a thousand times reassured. And now
it's over. — that aching tooth removed for ever!
I suppose this reads very absurd, but you don't know
how this clung on these years, or how difficult it
was, considering her virtues & her complete
determination to stay for ever, to make the effort.
So she may become some grey stony-hearted feline
in the midst your home however — & that was
intolerably sordid — every cup started as dust — I
had to spend every afternoon for ten days dusting
books & putting them back, with three awful

unfathoming advances from Nelly every hour or so — "Do
let me make you a cup of tea — you look so tired" & so on —
in the midst of this Elizabeth came in & took her friend to a
room I borrowed at the Stracheys. I thought her a
most stalwart & upstanding woman (please don't obey
this & read it to her) full of character & interest.
Shall try to see her again, — oh dear how nice the
summer will be without Nelly! I shall only
see a lady: I shall be free: I shall dine at the Zoo;
I shall make no attachments ever again: oh how cool &
quiet I feel this morning: how chuckle & chatter like a pair of
pigeons.

I saw Vita who had seen Jan. & Jan saw the adored
sister in law I hear. I broached the subject of K. St J.: but V.
would have none of it. I repeat in her absorption with G. she
was blind: blinder than usual. No, I did not admire
St J: as luck on the man: I thought it very stimming &
Persian interesting only, not criticism, only enthusiasm.
But — what is the work in my opinion? As this, nothing.
Her plan — Oh I feel so free, I repeat — a visit to
Ireland & the end of the month: & one to Scotland in
June, but only short tours. There is a scrabbled
dull letter, but the emotions of the last 2 days have
made scrambled eggs of my wits: I return my lodge &
look, like a child of 3, at a bird: at a flower: at a
butterfly. There was a butterfly. In
Vita & the raging wind. V.

NYPL
Rota 2.4.63

Monks House.
Monday. 5 April 1937

I was lying in bed this morning & saying to myself, the remarkable thing about Ethel is her tremendous "self-satisfaction" when in came your letter to confirm this profound psychological observation. How delighted I was!

"But as regards moral integrity ... I am not sure whether you & I have the same sensitiveness of conscience. It was a question of whether scrupulosity in such matters is a weakness or a virtue. It's a question of fibre. That's all. Moral fibre."

"Magnificent!" I cried aloud. And then this beaming mass of self-righteousness & tom cat goes on about having "pulled off 2 against the grain Jobs that nobody else [save the unutterably admirable E S] would take on" — nobody, no one, even in working, crowded days, with city men, can have such an unashamed, childlike admiration for themselves. I cried And off

You went again about not posting my letters
when you discovered that ~~you~~ I was "not built on the
same lines" as you — but whoever was built on
such an orbicular rotundity like the sun in a
fog & red hot complacency as Ethel? I asked
myself. No, I shall never be able to ask her to
Come & see me again, I sighed reading on, the sentence
that followed about your "rather morbid
scrupulousness, as some people would judge it."
And when I read that final, & oblique, pat by
Ethel on Ethel's own back. I could not help
thinking of a man called Beckett, — he used to have
just that way with him. Seriously.
Beckett, with your fine moral fibre, & your
perhaps morbid scrupulousness, what are you
looking at! What ~~infamous~~ infamous crime
has Vita committed, that she can't speak to me of,
Coarse as fibre as I am! I understand, I need
hardly say, that ~~to~~ people like Vita & myself
must attend you, with your fine fibre, & ask the
servants, a dozen times a day — it been too good
of you to put up with us — Still I wish you would
say plainly, & ~~to~~ simply, if you're not two
Somehow, what change you loved at her 20
Cryptically. stopping to pat your own back in between
Whew! I'm going to see her. I hope.
& I should like to know.
What has she done?

Rota 2.4.69

NYPL

Sunday. 8. Apr 1934

This is the letter that roused my anger. I thought, I think you'll agree that it was natural that I should think, from your language, that C. St John had revealed something grievously discreditable to Vita. And I said, if that is so, Ethel ought either to tell me outright what it was, or to say nothing about it. Mere dark hints that you were so stunned that you couldn't write — yet did hint — put my back up. And now, as far as I can make out from your second letter, C's horrid

revelations amount to no more than what
Vita told me herself. Hence my irritation
when your second letter blamed yourself, as
I thought, for your scrupulosity.
We'll only come up late on Tuesday. And
then I shall be faced with domestic horrors.
The Nelly affair I'm afraid is not solved
yet. But I've no time or room for more.
But do read your own words carefully &
consider if I was so absurd to be annoyed.

V.

NYPL

Rota 2.4.63

32 L.S. Thursday Apr. 19 /34

No, I cannot manage it – I've got into a rush & into a whirl, & nothing done, & it don't come. But do come when we're back – early in May. But I've no doubt on hunting a 'Nunne' – (what an odd word) against E.S. What do you take me for! I recognise difference – always have – but I don't let them separate; in fact, to contrary are human souls, they come to ally. I don't require a reflection of V.W – not at all: what I want is a contradiction; a